

# Wastage of War Appals Hall Caine

[Following is a special cable to the New York Times, dated London, July 31, by Hall Caine. (Copyright, 1917, by the New York Times Company. Copyright in Canada.)]

When the war began the great soldier who took the death of a sailor in the stormy waters of the northern seas was reported to have said it would last three years. It has already lasted so long, and is still going on. When will it end, and what is to come of it?

"If Adam," said Luther, "could have seen in a vision what horrible instruments his children were to invent to torture and to destroy each other he would have died of grief." Coming four centuries later, we may go further than that. If Adam could have foreseen what we are now seeing he would have prayed for death that he might never propagate his species.

Three years ago today (July 28) one of the oldest and feeblest of men, being crowned in the name of God and exercising the vicarship of Christ in his country, signed with his trembling hand the proclamation which plunged the world into this war. History will concern itself with the cause of his act, but the motive assigned for it was that a member of his family, a worthy but quite commonplace Austrian gentleman, as I have reason to know and say, had been foully done to death. For that crime millions have since died, millions have been wounded, and millions on millions have been brought down to the depths. One wonders what mad game the world has been playing.

Bloodshed is indeed the staple of history, and history is the story of how often and with what merciless brutality the children of men have slain each other. But if we could detach ourselves from all thought of the impulses with which we are prosecuting this war, all questions of the righteousness of our cause, and conceive of God walking not in the garden but in the desert of this war-worn world to make a reckoning of the good and bad in the doings of the last three years, what audit it would seem to be, what lesson such as history never before supplied for people who have been saying that war has a nobility and grandeur of its own, that it is productive of more good than evil, and is a beneficial influence in the betterment of mankind.

## THE LOSS TO CIVILIZATION

Think first of the injury the war has inflicted on the ordinary conditions of civilized existence. During forty-odd years preceding August 2, 1914, the chief activities of Europe in science, law, legislation, literature, art, and general industry were directed toward protecting and purifying human life, making it more clean and sweet and secure. There never has been a great war that has not lowered the standard of existence, but during the last three years, by the new necessities of modern warfare, from five to twenty-five millions of human creatures have been living a great part of their lives in holes in the ground, exposed to uncleanness and disease that belong to the condition of savage man.

Think next of the loss the war has inflicted on the world's wealth, not wealth that is represented by title deeds or pass books or gold and silver coins in the strongrooms of banks, but only the wealth that is necessary to the well-being of the race, the natural wealth that comes from the soil at the call of the sun and rain and changing seasons and the plow in the hands of man. There has never been a great war that has not diminished the sum of this natural wealth, but the present war, by the very number of nations engaged in it, has probably come nearer than any previous one to starving a large part of the human family, not to say of doom. Will the world recover from this three years' loss of its natural wealth? Nature works no overtime, the thousand sunrises since August, 1914, can never come again.

Then think of the loss to the world in human labor. Every great war has, in some measure, paralyzed industrial enterprise, but the necessities of modern warfare have gone nearly to killing it by submerging nearly all industrial enterprise in one sole work of producing these munitions of war which have now to be supplied in illimitable quantities. The ordinary progress of civilization in Europe has for the last three years been brought well nigh to a standstill.

This, too, is a loss that is irretrievable. It has yet to be seen if the energies of the world can ever make up for it. But the waste of human labor is the least part of the world's injury.

If the output of all the munition factories in the world since August, 1914, had been sunk to the bottom of the sea that would have been waste enough. But think of the uses their products have been put to. As man does not live by bread alone, his first duty after the necessities of food and clothing have been satisfied is to surround himself with those things of beauty and sanctity which link his life with the past and carry it on to the future. But the business of war is to batter down and burn up all such sacred and historic monuments, and never before has it done its work so ruthlessly. Peace builds cities; war destroys them. The big guns and high explosives of modern warfare, thundering and pounding on the habitation of man, have left vast tracts of Europe more bare and barren than the fiery desert. Large parts of Belgium, northern France, Serbia, and Galicia, lately so full of life and fruitfulness, now look as if the rake of hell had gone over them. Where there were home and inns and churches in which people lived and loved and laughed from generation to generation, there is only a wilderness of empty space whereon no stone stands above another. Nothing like this has happened before in all the mad history of war; neither earthquake nor eruption ever wrought such ruin. It is irreparable, no indemnity can restore what has been wrecked. Northern Europe may be rebuilt, but then it will be another Europe. The past that was alive in it is dead.

## THE MISERY OF WAR

Then think of the misery which scenes like these involve. Misery is the camp follower of all wars. There never has been a great war without its train of suffering. But the suffering of the past three years seems to have had no parallel in human history. Whole nations have been plunged into it, and the greatest suffering has been that of the small and the powerless.

Man that is born of woman must needs feel the ties of blood and brotherhood. Hence he gathers his children together into groups that have the same faith and the same customs and speak the same dear tongue. That in the mysterious workings of Providence is the origin of national spirit and love of motherland. It is totally undisturbed by any thought of whether she is big or little, strong or weak. My country is my mother, and, therefore, I love her and think her the fairest spot the sun shines upon. But when war comes in the armor of great nations it has usually no use for such emotions. Faith, custom, language, and kindred count for nothing against momentary military advantage or when the lust of a little earth. That was what happened three years ago when Austria marched over Serbia and Germany over Belgium, driving the native-born people with their women and little children from their smoking homes and scattering them over the world. For this, too, there can be no possible reparation. Misery can not be paid for. Belgium will regain her sovereignty and material amends will be made to her, but when peace is proclaimed the Belgians will go back, not to a country but to a cemetery. Every step of their homeward way will be, as the prime minister finely said, a station of the cross to the scene of Calvary, and if their resurrection is to come, as God grant it may, it will be peace, not war, that will bring it.

## THE WORLD'S LOSS OF PEOPLE

Then think of the injury the world has sustained during the last three years from loss of population. For the propagation of the race and the happiness and general wellbeing of the human family nature wants her youngest, strongest, bravest, and most resourceful. But these are precisely what war demands for its work of bloodshed and destruction, despoiling the world of the flower of its manhood. It condemns some to enforced celibacy, some to lifelong injury, and many to death. Every great war has committed this mad crime against the world and its Creator, but surely no war before the present one has done it so deliberately, so self-consciously, so shamelessly, and

on so great a scale. For this, too, no reparation is possible. Gold and silver can not pay for the loss of flesh and blood; no accession of territory can atone to us for the lives of our dead that lie under their wooden crosses along the sea in Flanders. The everlasting surf of proud if scorching tears that washes that consecrated coast will not be stayed by indemnities and annexations. When peace comes after all this sacrifice of life she must bring more than the conquering sword in her hand, or the victory will be in vain.

Then think of the wrong this war has done to the moral sense of mankind. Every war, whatever its necessity or justification, is an outrage on humanity, but war in our time as never before in man's history, is crime. In the past ages there has been much to excuse it. Differences of language, conflicts of faith and divisions of space, not to speak of more sinister evils, have been sufficient to create an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion in which wars have been bred, but modern education, travel, commerce, literature, and, above all, science, with its mysterious and angelic power, as in the telegraph, of bringing people in a moment into the same place, ought to have broken down the barriers that separated the nations by showing them that they were members, one of another, with the same joys and sorrows, the same weakness in the presence of man's relentless enemy, the elements, and the same dependence on the Merciful Father who is over all. They have not done so. War has come with its insensate brutalities and in a day all the barbed wire fences of ignorance and prejudice have been set up afresh, charged with redoubled currents of hatred and malice and lust of blood. Had one-tenth of all the lives destroyed by this three years' war been swallowed up by flood or earthquake, by another and more frightful Messina, Galveston, or San Francisco, what a wave of human brotherhood would have swept over the nations, making the whole world kin! But man, not nature, has been the author of this tragedy. So the people in Germany rejoice over the sinking of the Lusitania and illuminate the streets of Berlin after the slaughter of little children in London. What a moral catastrophe! Can humanity ever recover from it after the bitterness of the last three years? Is any reconciliation of peoples possible? If not, is real peace conceivable? When the end comes, will it only be a cessation of activities?

Shall we of the allied countries ever be able to take the hand of a German again? In looking to the future of the civilized nations must we always think and feel as if one hundred millions of our fellow creatures did not exist? Some of us who are not visionaries used to dream of a day when humanity would step out of darkness and put on the armor of light. Is that to be another of our day joys and buried hopes on the road to lift?

## A GLIMPSE AT THE FUTURE

And then think finally of the wrong this three years' war has done to religion. For two thousand years faith has been working for the christianization of the world. It has been a long and almost hopeless labor in the past with so many temporalities to contend against, so many pagan impulses to overcome. If there is one thing certain about Jesus Christ it is that chief among his purposes was that of bringing war to an end, of substituting for the force of arms the force of righteousness. Painfully through the ages has religion toiled after that great ideal, although again and again it has been compelled to see the vicars of Christ girding themselves with the sword in spite of the rebuke of Gethsemane.

But in these later days we were telling ourselves that in spite of all the machinations of military despotism the gospel of peace was sweeping through the world. We held conferences to celebrate its victorious advance, and great German theologians like Harnack came to England to preach the doctrine of universal pacification. Down to the first days of August, 1914, we were praying in our churches with a fervor and conviction never felt before that God would give us peace in our time, that He would grant to all nations a spirit of unity and concord, that He would save us from violent and untimely deaths, and above all that His Kingdom might come on earth, even as it is in heaven.

And then—what then? At the first blast of war the gospel of peace was gone, nations were